## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION COMMISSION AUTHORIZES TWO NEW NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall, Chairman of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, today announced establishment of two new National Wildlife Refuges in New Mexico and Texas totaling 19,077 acres. The announcement followed the August 24 meeting of the Commission in Washington, D. C.

The new areas are the Las Vegas-Maxwell National Wildlife Refuge, totaling 12,710 acres in northeastern New Mexico, and the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge, to be established with the purchase of a 6,367-acre tract on the Texas Gulf Coast near Houston.

The Las Vegas-Maxwell National Wildlife Refuge will consist of two divisions: the Maxwell Division of 3,264 acres and the Las Vegas Division of 9,446 acres. The Las Vegas Division is approximately 80 miles south of the Maxwell. Both Divisions are near towns of the same name.

Historically, northeastern New Mexico has been an important migration and wintering area for Canada geese and ducks. It has also been important in the past as a waterfowl nesting area. Extended drought, coupled with drainage of wetlands in this area, has caused a steady decline in waterfowl use in recent years. The Las Vegas and Maxwell Divisions are among the few sizable wetland areas remaining in New Mexico. Under intensive refuge management, the Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife estimates that duck and goose populations approaching those of the past can be accommodated on the new refuge.

Development plans call for using most of the presently irrigated farmlands to produce green browse and other foods for waterfowl. On the Las Vegas Division, additional small impoundments will be constructed to improve the area for waterfowl nesting and wintering use. Existing ponds and reservoirs on both Divisions will be managed where possible for the production of aquatic food plants for ducks and geese.

The newly authorized Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge in Texas is a natural waterfowl area of high value to ducks and geese. It is part of the important waterfowl wintering habitat for the Central Flyway and has a history of heavy waterfowl use.

The refuge area consists of low-lying marshes dotted with small brackish lakes. It is adjacent to shallow bays that annually attract large numbers of ducks and geese. The relatively rare mottled duck, a year-round resident of the Gulf Coast, nests in the refuge area.

The Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge is being established with the purchase of a key tract of 6,367 acres. The eventual size of the refuge is expected to be about 12,000 acres.

The amount approved by the Commission for acquiring the refuge lands totaled \$2.7 million. Funds for the purchase of waterfowl refuge lands come from the sale of Federal "Duck Stamps" to waterfowl hunters, conservationists, and stamp collectors.

In addition to Secretary Udall, members of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission are Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman, Secretary of Commerce John T. Connor, United States Senator Roman L. Hruska of Nebraska, United States Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana, United States Representative Frank M. Karsten of Missouri, and United States Representative Silvio O. Conte of Massachusetts.

Ex officio members of the Commission on August 24, representing States where new refuges or additions were authorized, were: William S. Huey, Chief of the Division of Special Services for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and A. J. Springs, Staff Services Officer for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission.

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